

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please replace the text of claims 1-7 with the following text:

1. A relay server comprising:
communicating means for communicating with a plurality of network devices; and
connection information holding means for holding connection information of the network devices capable of communicating by the communicating means,
wherein the communicating means carries out communication with the network devices in accordance with the connection information, and relays data between the network devices in accordance with connection demand information generated from one of the plurality of network devices.

A²
2. A communication system comprising:
a plurality of network devices; and
a relay server connected to the plurality of network devices via a network, wherein a first network device of the plurality of network devices establishes a communication path with the relay server, and generates a connection demand for communication with a second network device of the plurality of network devices to the relay sever when communicating with the second network device, and
the relay server relays the communication between the first and second network devices by using a communication path established in advance in accordance with the connection demand from the first network device.

3. The communication system according to claim 2 wherein the first network device is located in a local system, and connection to the first network device from outside the local system is limited.

4. The communication system according to claim 2 wherein the first network device is connected to the relay server via a gateway device having an address converting function.

5. A facsimile system comprising:
a facsimile machine connected to a first inner network;
a first gateway device for connecting the first inner network to an outer network; and
a relay server connected to the outer network for relaying communication between the first gateway device and a second gateway device, wherein the facsimile machine transmits and receives image data by being connected to the relay server via the first gateway device in advance.

6. The facsimile system according to claim 5 wherein the relay server manages the facsimile machine to be connected in accordance with identifying information specific to the facsimile machine.

7. The facsimile system according to claim 5 wherein a plurality of facsimile machines within the first inner network and a second inner network can be connected to the relay server via the first gateway device and the second gateway device, and the relay server manages each of the plurality of facsimile machines to be connected in accordance with identifying information specific to each of the plurality of facsimile machines.

Please add the following new claims:

8. (Newly Added) A relay server comprising:
a communicating device communicating with a plurality of network devices; and

a connection information holding device holding connection information of the network devices communicating by the communicating device,

wherein the communicating device carries out communication with the network devices in accordance with the connection information, and relays data between the network devices in accordance with connection demand information generated from one of the plurality of the network devices.

9. (Newly Added) The relay server according to claim 8, wherein a first network device of the plurality of network devices is located in a local system, and connection to the first network device from outside the local system is limited.

A 10. (Newly Added) The relay server according to claim 8, wherein a first network device of the plurality of network devices is connected to the relay sever via a gateway device having an address converting function.

11. (Newly Added) The relay server according to claim 8, wherein the relay server is connected to the Internet.

12. (Newly Added) The relay server according to claim 8, wherein the relay server includes a global IP address.

13. (Newly Added) The relay server according to claim 8, wherein the connection information includes a user ID and a password.

14. (Newly Added) The relay server according to claim 1, wherein the relay server is connected to the Internet.

15. (Newly Added) The relay server according to claim 1, wherein the relay server includes a global IP address.

16. (Newly Added) The relay server according to claim 1, wherein the connection information includes a user ID and a password.

17. (Newly Added) A method for communicating between a plurality of network devices and a relay server comprising:

establishing a communication path between each of a plurality of network devices and a relay server;

demanding a connection from one of the plurality of network devices to at least one other network device of the plurality of network devices using the relay server; and

relaying a communication between the one network device and the at least one other network device using an established communication path based on the connection demand from the one network device.

18. (Newly Added) The communication method according to claim 17 further comprising limiting the connection to the network devices from an outer network.

19. (Newly Added) The communication method according to claim 17 further comprising connecting the network devices to the relay server via a gateway device having an address converting function.

20. (Newly Added) The communication method according to claim 17 further comprising connecting the relay server to the Internet.